

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5199
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL MUNICH

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PFOR UR US
SUBJECT: SOVIET DISSIDENT PRESS CONFERENCE: STATEMENTS CONCERNING
U.S. ADMINISTRATION

SUMMARY: AS ADDRESSEES ARE NO DOUBT AWARE FROM PRESS
REPORTS, HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS AND MEMBERS OF SOVIET
JEWISH "REFUSENIK" COMMUNITY HELD JOINT PRESS CON-
FERENCE WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16. THIS CABLE DEALS WITH
STATEMENTS BY SAKHAROV CONCERNING THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION.
SEPTEL FOLLOW ON OTHER ASPECTS OF THE GATHERING.
END SUMMARY.

1. THE CENTERPIECE OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE WAS A STATE-
MENT WRITTEN BY SAKHAROV ABOUT THE MARCH 4 IZVESTIA
"EXPOSE" AND THE SUBSEQUENT ARREST OF SHCHARANSKIY.
THE STATEMENT WAS READ BY SAKHAROV'S WIFE; SAKHAROV
WAS PRESENT EVEN THOUGH HE WAS ILL WITH A BAD COLD.
WHILE WE HAVE NOT YET SEEN FULL TEXT, WE
UNDERSTAND SAKHAROV'S STATEMENT CHARACTERIZED THE
IZVESTIYA ARTICLES AND ARREST OF SHCHARANSKIY AS
"BLACKMAIL" AGAINST THE U.S. ON THE EVE OF THE
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VANCE VISIT, IN THE SENSE THAT SOVIET OFFICIALS
WERE COUNTING UPON USG CONCERN OVER THE SUCCESS
OF THE VISIT TO PREVENT THE ADMINISTRATION FROM
SPEAKING OUT ABOUT SHCHARANSKIY'S ARREST. THE
SOVIETS THUS HOPED TO FORCE THE U.S. TO SURRENDER
ITS POSITION ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE SOVIET UNION,
AND ALSO HOPED TO STRENGTHEN THEIR ABILITY TO

ACT "UNLAWFULLY" AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS
IN THE USSR.

2. DURING A CONFUSED AND DISJOINTED QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD FOLLOWING THE READING OF THE STATEMENT, SAKHAROV REPORTEDLY SAID AT VARIOUS TIMES;
--THE CURRENT, CRITICAL SITUATION OF THE SOVIET HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT WOULD BE GREATLY ASSISTED IF WORLD OPINION, THE U.S. CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT WOULD REACT TO SHCHARANSKIY'S ARREST;
--ANY RELAXATION OF PRESSURE FROM ABROAD ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE WOULD BE HIGHLY UNFORTUNATE AT THIS "CRITICAL MOMENT;"
--SOVIET STATEMENTS ALLEGING THAT USG CONCERN OVER HUMAN RIGHTS AMOUNTS TO INTERFERENCE IN SOVIET INTERNAL AFFAIRS WERE "PURE BLACKMAIL;"
--PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION HAVE NOT CAUSED FURTHER ARRESTS IN THE USSR;
--THE PRESIDENT'S POLICY WAS A LONG-RANGE ONE, BUT ANY HESITATION NOW WILL HAVE "A TRAGIC EFFECT."

3. IN RESPONSE TO A DIRECT QUESTION ABOUT WHAT SAKHAROV FELT PRESIDENT CARTER SHOULD DO, SAKHAROV REPORTEDLY SAID HE WAS ADDRESSING HIS REMARKS NOT ONLY TO THE PRESIDENT BUT TO WESTERN EUROPEAN LEADERS AS WELL, DID NOT FEEL IT APPROPRIATE TO OFFER ADVICE TO THE PRESIDENT, BUT WOULD BE HAPPY IF PRESIDENT CARTER CHOSE TO SPEAK OUT AT THIS
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TIME.

4. WE UNDERSTAND SAKHAROV WAS LATER ASKED IF HE INTENDED TO MEET WITH SECRETARY VANCE DURING THE LATTER'S VISIT HERE. SAKHAROV REPORTEDLY REPLIED THAT HE DID NOT WANT SUCH A MEETING IF IT WOULD BE AWKWARD FOR THE SECRETARY. SAKHAROV ADDED THAT HE WAS OF COURSE ALWAYS READY TO MEET WITH ANY FOREIGNERS WHO MIGHT FIND IT USEFUL TO TALK WITH HIM ON HUMAN RIGHTS, BUT HE DID NOT INTEND TO REQUEST A MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY.
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